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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000618

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MK](#) [GR](#) [MT](#) [KV](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: CRVENKOVSKI URGES POSITIVE U.S.
PRESSURE IN BOTH ATHENS AND SKOPJE ON NAME ISSUE; SUPPORTS
KOSOVO RECOGNITION, BUT CRITICAL OF PROCESS

REF: SKOPJE 616

Classified By: Amb. Reeker for reasons 1.5. (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The U.S. and other close allies should press both Athens and Skopje to consider the latest UN Mediator's name proposal positively, President Crvenkovski urged the Ambassador in an Oct. 9 meeting. Crvenkovski admitted not knowing the full content of the package, but even though it appeared to lean more toward Greece's position there was likely enough positive content for both sides to accept it or at least use it as a solid basis for further negotiation. He doubted whether PM Gruevski was prepared to be flexible. Ambassador said he planned to speak with the PM and strongly urge him not to say "no." Crvenkovski complained that Gruevski's tactics of using a parliamentary debate on Kosovo recognition could lead to unnecessary public discord when -- in his view -- the Macedonian people were already prepared to accept it. Ambassador said that recognition was already overdue and the result was more important than the PM's tactics. End summary.

A Deal We Can Work With?

¶2. (C) President Crvenkovski told the Ambassador Oct. 9 that name negotiator Dimitrov gave him only a summary by phone of the latest proposal from UN Mediator Nimetz, which he said upon Greek negotiator Vassilakis' insistence Nimetz only called a "set of ideas." Crvenkovski understood that -- whatever it is called -- the proposal is closer to the Greek position than Nimetz's Sept. 11 paper, in particular on the question of Macedonian identity and language. He believes both Greece and Macedonia may have reasons to accept or reject it. Crvenkovski admitted that he could not know Greek PM Karamanlis' thinking on the proposal, but noted the Greek press was not entirely negative.

¶3. (C) The President urged that neither side say no, and instead take the opportunity of Nimetz's two-week vacation to consult internally. He requested direct, positive U.S. pressure on both Skopje and Athens to consider the proposal and, if not agree to it outright, at least accept it as a solid basis for further negotiation. Pressure from the UK and Germany could also be helpful, but not from France, as Paris is viewed in Macedonia as far too pro-Greek.

¶4. (C) Crvenkovski was pessimistic that PM Gruevski would be flexible going forward. For his part, the President did not plan to hold a coordination meeting with Gruevski too quickly, preferring to lay the groundwork and project Macedonia as considering the proposal calmly and seriously. He was deeply concerned that should a name proposal go to

referendum, Gruevski may sabotage it; the entire Macedonian political leadership must be behind a solution, he insisted. Ambassador responded that he would call the PM the same day and urge him not to reject any deal out of hand. Macedonia must be reasonable and willing to negotiate whether Greece is or not.

¶ 15. (C) Ambassador reached Gruevski later Oct. 9 and urged him to consider the proposal or use it as a basis for negotiation. Gruevski responded that he is not fully informed about its content, but he heard from his chief of staff -- who was in New York with GoM name negotiator Dimitrov -- that Dimitrov thought the latest Nimetz proposal was "one of the worst" in recent memory. Nevertheless, the PM agreed that "tactically we shouldn't say no right away."

Kosovo Recognition: Get It Done

¶ 16. (C) Crvenkovski noted that the parliament was set to debate recognition of Kosovo the same day, adding that as president he had no legal role in the issue. He expressed disappointment that Gruevski and his party, VMRO-DPMNE, have apparently chosen not to take an official position but plan to "leave it up to parliament." He worried that a parliamentary debate with no clear position from the government would stir unnecessary public discord even though the public here is prepared for this step. This should not be viewed as just an "Albanian issue." Ambassador understood this concern, but added that Washington viewed Macedonian recognition of Kosovo as overdue and our expectation was that the matter would be closed today. (Note: While the it is

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correct that the opposition SDSM is upset that the government did not formally propose recognition and is debating that issue in parliament, we still expect the issue will be closed today, Oct. 9. SDSM has assured us that the party strongly supports recognition itself.)

Reeker